Chapter 1

A funny thing I read in this chapter was on the first page! It said, the teacher “stood next to you to keep your attention focused on the lesson” (p.1). That reminded me a lot of when I was in middle and high school because I was a bigger talker during classes and the teacher would stand next to me a lot while teaching the class. At the time, I kind of knew in the back of my mind that they were doing it because I was talking, but now reading it in this book really puts into perspective what they were doing. Students tend to listen or pay attention if they feel like the teacher is watching them or paying close attention to them during class. I know personally I would be looking at the board and taking notes when I felt as though the teacher wanted my attention and knew I was doing other things. Which brings me to a big topic about cellphones in the classroom. I’m sure we will discuss this later, but just thinking about it now and how to make sure your students aren’t looking at their phones during class is super important and helps tremendously with keeping them focused and on task. Also this chapter talks a lot about differentiated learning and how important it is to differentiate your classes. The biggest part for me was, “see[ing] classmates as being different points on the same journey, and differences from their own point on the journey are not seen as weak—just different” (p.4). This is so crucial to make sure that students feel comfortable being who they are and not worrying about being different. Everyone is different and that’s okay.

Chapter 2

This chapter talked about mastery and knowing IF a student understands something, but also HOW to make sure your students understand something. The six facets from UbD were mentioned in the beginning because they are a way to base different levels of understanding off of. I came across a part about having enough information on every student, which the book said was a common issue for most teachers. I feel like it’s impossible to ever have enough information on a student because people are always changing and learning new things. That’s a big concern for me that some of my students won’t get as much out of my classes as others will because there’s only one of me and I feel like I won’t be able to do as much one-on-one or give as much attention to every student as I’d like to. At the end of this chapter, it talked about when first starting off teaching, there is a sort of “plan” given to teachers where every English class should be on page 70 by week two, for example. I completely disagree with that style of teaching. There is no possible way that every class is going to be at the exact place that all the other classes will be at. Yes, as a health department, the 6th graders taking health class should be somewhat in the same area of topics as the other classes, but they won’t all be able to have the exact same syllabus and schedule because in every class there will be different types of learners and one class may have to stay on a topic for longer than another.

Chapter 3

I really like how this class is focused on backward design. A lot of teachers struggle to find relevance with their lessons or find a true meaning for why they teach on a topic. If you start with why, then a more meaningful product will come out in the end. It’s very important to give students checklists and deadlines in this age group, so that they can develop the skills they will need to time manage, plan, and create a well-done finished product. This goes for papers, presentations, etc. I know that for me it’s a lot easier to get things done when I plan out when and how I will get something accomplished. Instead of saying I’ll do it at some point, make notes that clearly state when things need to be done because if not they will not get done. The question of, “Will this be on the test?”, is one of my least favorite questions. A student should not have to ask that because if it’s not going to be tested on and if it isn’t of real importance to the students learning than why was it even brought up or discussed when there are so many other things that need to be fit in to a class. Again with assessments, using assessments to improve your classroom environment is so important. A lot of teachers will hand out tests and leave it up to the student to figure out what’s going on because you got a D on the test, but we have way more stuff to cover in class that are more important that your understanding of the subject… sorry we have to move on. The dreaded “see me” that teachers write on tests and papers is so downgrading for a student.

Chapter 4

This chapter was very straight forward. First it discussed portfolios and how helpful they can be for keeping record of student work and the analyzing of a students learning. In another class we discussed ways to better incorporate health into our classrooms. I think that adding a health aspect to a portfolio would make tremendous changes in how our students health is evaluated. Not many schools take into consideration the overall health of their students. It’s not only important to teach students academics, it’s also important for them to be focused on healthy foods and keeping active. If a student is not healthy, it is hard for them to focus on academics because they are focused on other things, such as: hunger, weight, fatigue, distractions, etc. All of these can be improved just by helping our students to understand what is important in maintaining a healthy lifestyle. It is hard for many families because they think that all healthy food is expensive, but there are ways for students to get the nutrients that they need on a low budget. This is an area that I believe health teachers need to focus more on, which is helping our student’s parents in finding what foods are reasonably priced instead of just sending home a paper of fruits and veggies their child should be eating. We have to work with these parents to create healthier diets for the students, so instead of them feeling like they’re failures and teachers are just trying to tell them how to parent, we set up a teacher-parent trusting relationship where we find the happy medium and want what’s best for the students.

Chapter 5

This chapter was very confusing for me. After reading I think I was more confused about what tiering means. When I got to the end of it, there were some discussion questions that I decided to focus on. I think overall these questions addressed the main point and concern that I think a lot of teachers struggle to find a balance with, and that’s when to be firm with students and when to be more laid back. There are times when you’ll have a student who always slacks off and then there will be times where a student always does their work, but when the day comes that they do something out of the ordinary, how will you handle it? I think every situation, not only in teaching, but when making decisions, you have to take a step back and look at it as a whole. It’s important to treat every student with the same amount of respect and rules, but when a student is having a hard time and isn’t getting their work done, I think in this case it’s the job of the teacher to sit down with either the student or the student’s parents and find out what’s really going on. Maybe the work is boring, they don’t understand, or something outside of school has been going on that is distracting him/her from doing any school work. As well as communicating with the family, you can talk with other teachers about how the student is doing in their classes. If they have a similar view than something is probably going on and instead of punishing the student with bad grades or detention, find out the route of the problem and attempt to help this student succeed.

Chapter 6

When I was growing up in middle and high school, a lot of teachers would create their tests not based off of what the students needed to know. There would be random questions on the test that were variations of what the study guide said. In my own opinion, making cryptic questions or slightly changing questions has no purpose in assessing the knowledge of students, it just confuses them and causes them to doubt their answers. Another topic that this chapter discussed was making assessments efficient and clear for students. For example, using true or false questions on tests. A lot of times the T and F look alike and to make sure students are giving clear responses, it would be better to have the T’s and F’s already written out. We aren’t always testing students on their writing ability, so why make this something you, as a teacher, have to worry about when grading. This section of the chapter also talked about how to format matching questions. I think this part was just too specific and unnecessary. I remember questions that teachers would ask phrased, “Which of these is NOT associated with…”, this does not assess understanding, but gives the student more to think about and makes them have to sort of decode the question before figuring out the actual answer. The point of assessing students is to be able to see how much they understand from the unit and to know how the class is doing as a whole, if you can move on to a new topic or if they need more work in a certain area.